

"STATE OF SIEGE" (orig under Lefever)**Hypnotic Lies****About Terrorists**

By Ernest W. Lefever

The American debut in April of the film "State of Siege," produced by Costa-Gavras, was conceived in silence and born in controversy. The producer's reputation for "Z" and "The Confession" led the American Film Institute to schedule, sight unseen, "State of Siege" as the first foreign offering in its new home at the Kennedy Center here. But when AFI Director George Stevens, Jr. saw it, he abruptly canceled the film because it "rationalizes an act of political assassination" and was thus inappropriate to show in a memorial to an assassinated President.

The "censorship" furor precipitated by the cancellation soon gave way to a more serious debate about the basic character of this political film produced by the "Hitchcock of the Left" and co-written by the author of "The Battle of Algiers," Franco Solinas, a member of the Italian Communist party.

Is "State of Siege" a factual documentary, as its writers repeatedly claim, or is it fiction, propaganda, or a mixture of all three? Whatever the answer, does the film rationalize assassination and other forms of terrorism?

IN A SCOPE OF American interviews, Costa-Gavras asserted that the film is a factually exact portrayal of the public life, work and death of Dan A. Mitrione, an American AID police adviser in Uruguay who was kidnapped and murdered by the Tupamaro terrorists in mid-1970.

In the film, the interviews with Costa-Gavras and Solinas, and the book, "State of Siege" (the film script and supporting "documents"), the Tupamaros are presented as the heroes of the people's revolution against a repressive and semi-fascist Uruguayan government. Dan Mitrione is cast as a willing tool of American imperialism and repression, a super CIA agent who under the guise of an AID adviser promotes and teaches police torture and organizes and supports "death squads" to murder "democratic leaders." He is portrayed as a calculating and ruthless man, without sentiment.

The cool facts contradict the torrid film at almost every significant point. The film says Mitrione was sent to the Dominican

Republic for two years to install, with the help of the U.S. Marines and the CIA, a reactionary junta regime acceptable to the United Fruit Co. and Cardinal Spellman. Actually, Mitrione never set foot on Dominican soil.

THE FILM SAYS MITRIONE was dispatched to Brazil to replace "Goulart's democratic regime" with a repressive military government. In fact, Mitrione was not an agent of any kind. He never worked for the CIA or FBI. He was an AID police adviser in Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte helping to improve law enforcement by encouraging the civil police to become more professional through better training, communications equipment and organization. He and his fellow AID advisers were there at the request of the government and advised the police under both the Goulart and successor regimes.

Currently AID has a small number of police advisers in 17 different Third World countries and provides training for police officers from twice that many at its International Police Academy here. Like other forms of U.S. technical assistance, the public safety program is open and its activities are often covered by the press. Its aim is to upgrade all aspects of civilian law enforcement, except those related to political intelligence.

The film says that Mitrione taught new and sophisticated forms of torture to the police in Brazil and later in Uruguay. There is not a shred of truth in this allegation.

FROM ITS BEGINNING under the Eisenhower administration, public safety advisers have stressed professional, legal and humane methods in interrogation, crowd control and all other aspects of police work. In a worldwide study of the program at the Brookings Institution, including field work in 15 countries, I found no evidence to support the torture charge which has appeared in Communist and other far-left publications that typically portray the United States as a semi-fascist and repressive power.

The film says Mitrione organized and directed fascist "death squads" who physically eliminated revolutionary leaders in Uruguay. Neither he nor any other American official had anything to do with such "death squads," which in any event, did not even exist in Uruguay in 1970, the peri-

STATE OF Siege
COSTA-GAVRAS, CONSTANTIN
od of the film. Several sporadic groups did appear in 1971 and 1972, and they accounted for at least two murders, to the embarrassment of the Uruguayan authorities.

The film depicts the Tupamaros as latter day Robin Hoods — clean shaven, young, virile, disciplined, intelligent, competent and possessed of a dream of compassion and justice — but because of government repression they were compelled to kidnap and later "execute" Mitrione.

In fact, the Tupamaros stand somewhere between the American Weathermen and the Black September fighters. The Tupamaro terrorists have no positive political or social program and they never gained significant popular support. (At the zenith of their power in 1971, their most closely allied political faction gained 4.3 percent of the popular vote.)

The film dramatically portrays manufactured violence by Uruguayan authorities (incidents drawn from the future and twisted almost beyond recognition) but shows almost no Tupamaro violence

THE TUPAMAROS initiated terror in Uruguay; Mitrione was their twelfth murder victim. The film acknowledges only the Mitrione murder, but this brutal and senseless act is not shown, presumably to make the Tupamaros look better. Not reluctant to recruit common criminals into their ranks, the Tupamaros had a long record of terrorism, including assault, robbery, arson, kidnapping, and bombing. In 1969 alone they made violent assaults against 38 policemen; four policemen were murdered.

The film implies that a "state of siege" was put into effect in 1968. This was not true.

Uruguay in 1970 was one of the most open and democratic countries in the world. There was no death penalty and the maximum sentence for any crime was 30 years. The prisons were run by the Ministry of Culture. The wide spectrum of political groups were free to organize. The Communist party had 37,000 members with elected representatives in both houses of Parliament and published a daily newspaper. There were no "political prisoners," only persons held for committing ordinary crimes.

(Basic Democratic rights continued in Uruguay until April 15, 1972, — almost 20 months after Mitrione was murdered — when a form of martial law was declared by parliament in response to Tupamaro terror. Last Wednesday, the president in cooperation with the army closed parliament and created a Council of State, in its place, to deal with "left-wing subversion" and the economic crisis.)

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